



NEWS RELEASE

Joseph E. Kernan, Governor
Alan D. Degner, Commissioner

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Jim Edwards, Project Excellence, 812/ 449-1964

State announces grant for Spencer County advanced manufacturing initiative

INDIANAPOLIS, Ind. – Supporting an innovative new local workforce development effort in Spencer County, today Gov. Joe Kernan awarded a \$285,000 grant to help launch Project Excellence.

Funded through the Indiana Department of Workforce Development, Project Excellence is a county-wide organization created by a group of Spencer County educators, employers and economic developers dedicated to improving the advanced manufacturing skills of the local workforce.

With the grant, Project Excellence will work with area businesses to identify skills needed to successfully perform advanced manufacturing jobs and then by working with local educational institutions customize learning opportunities to meet those needs. Project Excellence will also establish two fully equipped, state-of-the-art Advanced Manufacturing Technology Academies at two of the county's high schools that will be open to both students and adults.

"Advanced manufacturing is an incredibly important part of Spencer County's economic development strategy and developing a highly trained, readily available workforce is crucial to its success," said Gov. Kernan. "We are confident that the work that Project Excellence will do and the investments it makes will position Spencer County for even more growth in the years to come."

Located at Heritage Hills High School and South Spencer High School, the two labs will be operational in January and will provide "hands on" experiences utilizing pre-engineering equipment purchased from Jeffersonville's Amatrol. Initially up to 30 high school students will be involved in testing and validating the curriculum that will eventually be available to the entire Spencer County workforce. By this summer, Project Excellence anticipates that 20 adults and out of school youth will begin an introduction to advanced manufacturing designed to culminate in completion of advanced manufacturing Certificates of Technical Achievement.

"Spencer County faces three key challenges that are common in rural counties. To be successful we must address the issues of poverty, illiteracy and an aging workforce that confront our community," said Jim Edwards, a local businessman who spearheaded the effort. "Project Excellence can do that and will do that. We will use this state grant to offer high-end training and educational opportunities that will lead to better jobs and better lives for our citizens. We can't thank Gov. Kernan, the Department of Workforce Development and the state enough for this assistance."

With the funding Project Excellence will also create two High Performance Learning Projects associated with the county's adult education centers that will introduce participants to careers and training opportunities in the area of Advanced Manufacturing. Additionally, participants will have their

skills continually assessed using the remediation tools provided by the state in conjunction with the Indiana@Work program.

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“What Spencer County is doing is creating a new model for developing, training and sustaining a qualified, capable workforce,” said Alan Degner, Commissioner of the Indiana Department of Workforce Development. “They have brought together members of the business, education and economic development communities and figured out the type of skills their workers need to be successful. They are putting the infrastructure in place to deliver that training and build up that workforce.”

Project Excellence was formed in cooperation with the Southwestern Indiana Network for Education (SINE) the North Spencer School Corp., the South Spencer School Corp., Lincolnland Economic Development Corp., the Spencer County Regional Chamber of Commerce, and the Spencer County Learning Partnership (project team includes business, education and local elected officials). It is a turnkey solution capable of developing the capacity of the partnership to maintain the project over time.

Through its various programs and initiatives, the DWD is charged with continually improving the Hoosier workforce by assisting companies to create new jobs and improve employee skills. The agency offers a variety of training and educational grants, partners with the state's 27 WorkOne Centers, administers the unemployment insurance system, provides labor market information, assists employers with preparing workers for layoffs and closures, and operates a statewide job placement service.

For more information on this or other DWD programs, call 1-888-WorkOne or visit the web site at www.workforce.IN.gov.

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